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VACCINIUM SEMPERVIRENS RAF.: A LOST SYNONYM FOR VACCINIUM OVATUM PURSH¹

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Vaccinium sempervirens Rayner & Henderson (1980) was proposed in 1980 as a new species in *Vaccinium* section *Herpothamnus* (Small) Sleumer. This section was previously recognized as monotypic, consisting only of *V. crassifolium* Andrews (1800). As a result of their study of sect. *Herpothamnus*, Kirkman and Ballington have suggested that *V. sempervirens* be reduced to a subspecies of *V. crassifolium* (Kirkman, 1987, Ph.D. dissertation, N. Carolina State Univ., Raleigh; Kirkman and Ballington, 1989; Kirkman et al., 1989).

While researching the taxonomic history of sect. *Herpothamnus*, a previous use of the binomial *Vaccinium sempervirens* by C. S. Rafinesque was discovered in Merrill's (1949) *Index Rafinesquianus*: "*V. sempervirens* Raf. Herb. Raf. 54. 1833, nom. Oregon (Lewis and Clark)." Merrill's use of "*nomen*" indicated that Rafinesque's publication listed the name without a description. However, the fact that Merrill did not say "*nomen nudum*" led me to a more extensive search of Rafinesque's work.

Rafinesque (1833) indicated that he had established *Vaccinium sempervirens* in his "Mpt florula 1817," leading to a search for that publication, and subsequently to consultation with the historian Charles Boewe. Boewe recognized that "Mpt" was an abbreviation for "manuscript" and concluded that Rafinesque was referring to his *Florula Missurica, Mandanensis and Oregonensis*, a "pamphlet" he listed for 1817 on page 35 of his *Herbarium Rafinesquianum* (1833). Rafinesque wrote out a manuscript for

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this "pamphlet" at least twice, sending it to William Swainson for publication in England and to Bory de Saint-Vincent in Brussels for publication in the *Annales Générales des Sciences Physiques*; but it never was published, and is not among the Swainson papers at the Linnean Society of London. Boewe also unsuccessfully searched Rafinesque's letters of the period, especially those to A. P. de Candolle, because Rafinesque frequently sent substantial plant descriptions to Candolle, hoping they would appear in the latter's *Prodromus*.

The last chance in Boewe's search for Rafinesque's *Vaccinium sempervirens* was an unpublished Rafinesque manuscript from the period located in the American Philosophical Society Library in Philadelphia. Its title had been listed as "*Neophyton; or new plants, genera and species from North Carolina, by C. S. Rafinesque. Book first, Philadelphia 1830 (300 numbers).*" Boewe later checked the manuscript in Philadelphia and found that "North Carolina" was actually "North America." The first book (of three), contained the following entry as transcribed from Rafinesque's handwriting by Boewe:

"283 *Vaccinium sempervirens* Raf. [(1816) fol. perennis petiolatis ovato oblongis, acutis, serrulatis, plicatis, coriaceis, lucidis subtus glaucis, Baccis pendulis atropurpureis—In Oregon 6 to 8 feet high. Berries dried by Ind[ians], or baked, cakes or bread of it."

There is no doubt that Rafinesque was describing *V. ovatum* Pursh which was published in Pursh's *Flora Americae septentrionalis* (1814), and "Oregon" was the territory in the Pacific Northwest. Rafinesque was aware of *V. ovatum*, since he published the only review of Pursh's book to appear in Pursh's lifetime (Rafinesque, 1818). The only mention of *Vaccinium* in that review, however, is of what is now *V. stamineum* L., which he referred to as forming "a peculiar genus or subgenus, *Polycodium*." He further suggested that "the whole tribe of *Ericacea* or *Bicornia* must be newly modelled."

Although Rafinesque apparently tried to publish a description of *Vaccinium sempervirens* at least three times, until now only the name and proposed location of the description have been published. A specimen has not been found, even among the Rafinesque specimens recently uncovered by W. R. Overlease (1986, pers. comm.) in William Darlington's herbarium at West Chester University. The specimen was probably among those in Rafinesque's personal herbarium that were purged by Elias Durand or

destroyed by rats following Rafinesque's death (Merrill, 1949; Stuckey, 1971). Since the name is a *nomen nudum*, there can be no effect on the validity of *V. ovatum* or the later use of *V. sempervirens* by Rayner and Henderson. However, in light of the evidence presented, there is a case for recognizing *V. sempervirens* Raf. Herb. Raf. 54. 1833. *nom. nud.* as a synonym for *V. ovatum*.

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